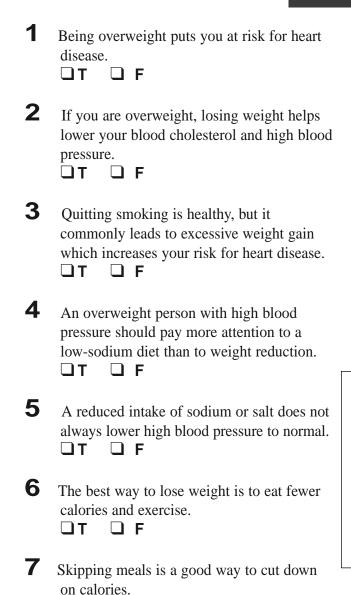# Obesity & Overweight

Check Your Weight and Heart Disease

I.Q.

The following statements are either true or false. The statements test your knowledge of overweight and heart disease. The correct answers can be found on the following page.

1 Being overweight puts you at risk for heart disease.
❏ T   ❏ F

2 If you are overweight, losing weight helps lower your blood cholesterol and high blood pressure.
❏ T   ❏ F

3 Quitting smoking is healthy, but it commonly leads to excessive weight gain which increases your risk for heart disease.
❏ T   ❏ F

4 An overweight person with high blood pressure should pay more attention to a low-sodium diet than to weight reduction.
❏ T   ❏ F

5 A reduced intake of sodium or salt does not always lower high blood pressure to normal.
❏ T   ❏ F

6 The best way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories and exercise.
❏ T   ❏ F

7 Skipping meals is a good way to cut down on calories.
❏ T   ❏ F

8 Foods high in complex carbohydrates (starch and fiber) are good choices when you are trying to lose weight.
❏ T   ❏ F

9 The single most important change most people can make to lose weight is to avoid sugar.
❏ T   ❏ F

10 Polyunsaturated fat has the same number of calories as saturated fat.
❏ T   ❏ F

11 Overweight children are very likely to become overweight adults.
❏ T   ❏ F

YOUR SCORE: How many correct answers did you make?

10–11 correct=Congratulations! You know a lot about weight and heart disease. Share this information with your family and friends.

8–9 correct=Very good.

Fewer than 8=Go over the answers and try to learn more about weight and heart disease.

NHLBI Obesity Education Initiative

Answers

To Your Weight and Heart Disease I.Q. Test

1 True. Being overweight increases your risk for high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure, two of the major risk factors for coronary heart disease. Even if you do not have high blood cholesterol or high blood pressure, being overweight may increase your risk for heart disease. Where you carry your extra weight may affect your risk too. Weight carried at your waist or above seems to be associated with an increased risk for heart disease in many people. In addition, being overweight increases your risk for diabetes, gallbladder disease, and some types of cancer.

2 True. If you are overweight, even moderate reductions in weight, such as 5 to 10 percent, can produce substantial reductions in blood pressure. You may also be able to reduce your LDL-cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol) and triglycerides and increase your HDL-cholesterol ("good" cholesterol).

3 False. The average weight gain after quitting smoking is 5 pounds. The proportion of ex-smokers who gain large amounts of weight (greater than 20 pounds) is relatively small. Even if you gain weight when you stop smoking, change your eating and exercise habits to lose weight rather than starting to smoke again. Smokers who quit smoking decrease their risk for heart disease by about 50 percent compared to those people who do not quit.

4 False. Weight loss, if you are overweight, may reduce your blood pressure even if you don't reduce the amount of sodium you eat. Weight loss is recommended for all overweight people who have high blood pressure. Even if weight loss does not reduce your blood pressure to normal, it may help you cut back on your blood pressure medications. Also, losing weight if you are overweight may help you reduce your risk for, or control, other health problems.

5 True. Even though a high sodium or salt intake plays a key role in maintaining high blood pressure in some people, there is no easy way to determine who will benefit from eating less sodium and salt. Also, a high intake may limit how well certain high blood pressure medications work. Eating a diet with less sodium may help some people reduce their risk of developing high blood pressure. Most Americans eat more salt and other sources of sodium than they need. Therefore, it is prudent for most people to reduce their sodium intake.

6 True. Eating fewer calories and exercising more is the best way to lose weight and keep it off. Weight control is a question of balance. You get calories from the food you eat. You burn off calories by exercising. Cutting down on calories, especially calories from fat, is key to losing weight. Combining this with a regular physical activity program, like walking, bicycling, jogging, or swimming, can not only help in losing weight but also in maintaining

the weight loss. A steady weight loss of 1 to 2 pounds a week is safe for most adults, and the weight is more likely to stay off over the long run. Losing weight, if you are overweight, may also help reduce your blood pressure and raise your HDL-cholesterol, the "good" cholesterol.

7 **False.** To cut calories, some people regularly skip meals and have no snacks or caloric drinks in between. If you do this, your body thinks that it is starving even if your intake of calories is not reduced to a very low amount. Your body will try to save energy by slowing its metabolism—that is, decreasing the rate at which it burns the calories. This makes losing weight even harder and may even add body fat. Try to avoid long periods without eating. Five or six small meals are often preferred to the usual three meals a day for some individuals trying to lose weight.

8 **True.** Contrary to popular belief, foods high in complex carbohydrates (like pasta, rice, potatoes, breads, cereals, grains, dried beans and peas) are lower in calories than foods high in fat. In addition, they are good sources of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. What adds calories to these foods is the addition of butter, rich sauces, whole milk, cheese, or cream, which are high in fat.

9 **False.** Sugar has not been found to cause obesity; however, many foods high in sugar are also high in fat. Fat has more than twice the calories as the same amount of protein or carbohydrates (sugar and starch). Thus, foods that are high in fat are high in calories. High-sugar foods, like cakes, cookies, candies, and ice cream, are high in fat and calories and low in vitamins, minerals, and protein.

10 **True.** All fats—polyunsaturated, monounsaturated, and saturated—have the same number of calories. All calories count, whether they come from saturated or unsaturated fats. Because fats are the richest sources of calories, eating less total fat will help reduce the number of calories you eat every day. It will also help reduce your intake of saturated fat. Particular attention to reducing saturated fat is important in lowering your blood cholesterol level.

11 **False.** Obesity in childhood does increase the likelihood of adult obesity, but most overweight children will not become obese. Several factors influence whether or not an overweight child becomes an overweight adult: (1) the age the child becomes overweight; (2) how overweight the child is; (3) the family history of overweight; and (4) dietary and activity habits. Getting to the right weight is desirable, but children's needs for calories and other nutrients are different from the needs of adults. Dietary plans for weight control must allow for this. Eating habits, like so many other habits, are often formed during childhood, so it is important to develop good ones.

Hearts N' Parks

NHLBI Health Information Center
P.O. Box 30105, Bethesda, MD   20824-0105
phone: (301) 592-8573   fax: (301) 592-8563

GUIDELINES ON
Overweight and Obesity

With the release of the *Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults: Evidence Report*, which is intended for health professionals, many patients have expressed interest in information on how to lose weight and improve their health.

Overweight and Obesity— What Are The Risks?

Over one-half of all American adults (about 97 million) are overweight or obese. If you are overweight or obese, carrying this extra weight puts you at risk for developing many diseases, especially heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer.

1

Box 1—Consider the Risks

If you are overweight or obese, you are at risk for developing the following diseases:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Arthritis
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems
- Some cancers
  - Endometrial
  - Breast
  - Prostate
  - Colon

2

Box 2—Calculation Directions and Sample

Here is a shortcut method for calculating BMI

(Example: for a person who is 5 feet 5 inches tall weighing 180 lbs.)

1. Multiply weight (in pounds) by 703   180 x 703 = 126,540

2. Divide the answer in step 1 by height (in inches)   126,540/65 = 1,946

3. Divide the answer in step 2 by height (in inches) to get your BMI   1,946/65 = 29.9

BMI = 29.9

What Is Your Risk?

First, let's gather some information—

1. *Check Your Body Mass Index*
   Your body mass index (BMI) is a good indicator of your risk for a variety of diseases since it gives an accurate estimate of your total body fat. There are two ways to check your BMI. One way is to use the chart on the next page to find your weight and height and then go above that column to find your BMI. The other way to check your BMI is to calculate it; one method is shown in Box 2. Another way to do this: Divide your weight in pounds by your height in inches squared and then multiply the total by 703. Once you know your BMI, check Box 3, which shows the BMI ranges for underweight, normal weight, overweight, and obesity.

2. *Waist Circumference Measurement*

Your waist circumference measurement is also important in determining your overall risk. If most of your fat is around your waist, you are at greater chance for developing risk factors for heart disease and diabetes. This risk increases with a waist measurement of greater than 35 inches for women or greater than 40 inches for men.

Are You At Risk?

Talk to your doctor to see if you are at an increased risk and if you should lose weight. Your doctor will evaluate your BMI, waist measurement, and other risk factors for heart disease. These risk factors are shown in Box 4.

If you are overweight, do not have a high waist measurement, and have less then 2 risk factors, it's important that you not gain any more weight. If you are overweight (BMI 25 to 29.9) and have two or more risk factors, or if you are obese (BMI 30), it is important for you to lose weight. Even a small weight loss (just 10 percent of your current weight) will help lower your risk of developing the diseases listed in Box 1.

And remember, if you do need to lose weight there are no quick fixes. Losing as little as 10 percent of your current body weight at a rate of 1 to 2 pounds per week may take as long as six months, but will make it easier to keep off. And it will give you the time to make new healthy lifestyle changes.

Additional Resources

For additional information on the Clinical Guidelines on Overweight and Obesity, contact the NHLBI Obesity Education Initiative:

NHLBI Health Information Center
P.O. Box 30105, Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
301-592-8573, 301-592-8563 (fax);
or visit the NHLBI Web site at
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

3

Box 3—Classification of Overweight and Obesity by BMI

	BMI
Underweight	<18.5
Normal	18.5–24.9
Overweight	25.0–29.9
Obesity	>30.0

4

Box 4—Risk Factors

Besides being overweight or obese, other risk factors to consider are:

• Cigarette smoking
• High blood pressure (hypertension)
• High LDL-cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol)
• Low HDL-cholesterol ("good" cholesterol)
• High triglycerides
• High blood glucose (sugar)
• Family history of premature heart disease
• Physical inactivity

Hearts N' Parks

NHLBI Health Information Center
P.O. Box 30105, Bethesda, MD   20824-0105
phone: (301) 592-8573   fax: (301) 592-8563